



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
NEWS RELEASE

Department of Toxic Substances Control

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**Waste Management Requirements Simplified
Some Discarded Mercury Products Now Considered Hazardous Waste**

Sacramento --- The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) announced today that regulations affecting the management of discarded mercury-containing products took effect on March 15, 2003. The regulations will establish the requirements for persons who generate, transport, and store several different categories of mercury-containing hazardous waste.

"These regulations allow for the safe and efficient collection, recycling and re-use of discarded mercury-containing products", said DTSC Director Ed Lowry.

Universal wastes are subject to management controls based on the risk they pose to the environment and public health. Universal waste management allows for the safe and efficient collection, transportation, and proper recycling or disposal of these wastes, many of which have often been improperly disposed of.

The regulations designate several categories of discarded products as universal wastes, simplifying current waste management requirements. The categories are:

- Dental amalgam wastes generated in dental offices during the placement and removal of fillings
- Mercury-containing pressure and vacuum gauges generated by laboratories and health care facilities
- Mercury-containing counterweights and dampers used in various products including grandfather clocks, archery bows, and shotguns
- Mercury thermometers, mercury dilators, and weighted tubing
- Mercury-containing rubber flooring installed in some gymnasiums prior to the early 1970s
- Mercury-containing gas flow regulators found in older residential gas meters

(M O R E)

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Additionally, the regulations newly identify four categories of mercury-added products, which, when discarded, will be considered hazardous wastes, regardless of the amount of mercury in the waste. These wastes may also be managed as universal wastes. The four categories of wastes and their effective dates are:

- Mercury-added novelty items (effective January 1, 2004): Mercury-added novelties include such items as holiday decorations, jewelry, cards, and toys.
- Mercury-added lamps (effective February 9, 2004): Fluorescent tubes and several other types of lamps (not incandescent light bulbs) contain a small amount of mercury that is necessary for their operation. Currently, most fluorescent lamps contain enough mercury to be a hazardous waste, but some have a low enough mercury concentration that they are not considered hazardous and may be disposed of with non-hazardous trash.
- Mercury-containing motor vehicle light switches (effective January 1, 2005): Under the new regulations, anyone intending to crush a motor vehicle for scrap metal will be required to first remove mercury switches that control the hood and truck convenience lights. Such switches are found in many vehicles manufactured since the mid-1980s. Vehicles manufactured with mercury-containing light switches after January 1, 2005 will be prohibited from being sold in California.
- Non-automotive mercury switches (effective February 9, 2006): The regulations designate as hazardous waste, non-automotive mercury switches and products that contain them, i.e. older clothes washers and other appliances.

The new regulations can be viewed the DTSC website at http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/LawsRegulationsPolicies/Mercury/Oeara_regs_mercfinaltext.pdf. A fact sheet on the regulations is also available for review at <http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/Mercury/index.html>

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The Department of Toxic Substances Control's mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment and ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.

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"The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our Web-site at www.dtsc.ca.gov."